

Testimony to 2007 Legislature re: Resource Facilitation Service

I am here to support funding for the Montana Resource Facilitation Service, a program that serves Montana's brain injured and their families by providing information and personal support to anyone who asks for it. Although this does not replace professional diagnosis and counseling, it helps to serve as a basis for the brain-injured and their families/caregivers to personally cope with their unique situations.

The plight of the brain injured can be a very dismal one. Following a brain injury, the survivors and their families/caregivers are thrown into a world of extreme confusion, emotional ups and downs, a drastic change in life styles, and an alteration of their personal, professional, and vocational lives. This is something that we have very little control over. Coping with a brain injury involves more than merely understanding the professional diagnosis and trying to do the best we can to "live our lives to the fullest". It also involves accepting our new selves and finding methods to use to cope with the limitations that we now have, limitations that may have been unthinkable or unimaginable before.

We enter into a new type of lifestyle in which there is a tremendous amount of questioning, asking: what has happened, what are the changes that we are experiencing, how permanent are these changes, what part of our personal makeup have we lost or retained, can we recover or re-learn some of the skills/functions lost, and what do we have to do to be happy and successful in our lives?

Because of the very nature of brain injuries -each one being unique to each person- there is no single method that can be followed to cope with our personal situations. Our worlds are turned upside down. We feel isolated from our families, friends, and communities, knowing that we don't fit in to the norm as we may have before, and this can lead to individual cases of social withdrawal and a deterioration or loss of self-esteem. Such things as mood swings, confusion, apathy, emotional instability and loss of personal worth can then dominate our lives. .

We may not be able to return to our professional lives, either, and this then creates feelings of inferiority and resentment. Enrollment and participation in programs such as Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid, vocational rehabilitation, and professional counseling can be very confusing and overwhelming to us. The aid of others can help each of us to begin improving our lives by working with our limitations rather than trying to ignore or overpower them.

The Brain Injury Association of Montana has served as the central source of information, referral, and personal support for us. The programs they offer to those in need - ~~such as the resource facilitation service~~ - must not be minimized or abandoned if we are to have something that will serve us and help us to live qualitative lives.

I ask you to support the requested funding for this service so that we with brain injuries may have an easily accessible and personal support system that will help us regain as much "normalcy" as possible and be able to have a positive element in our lives that has the potential to improve our life styles - in spite of our neurological deficits.

Michael P. Sullivan, survivor  
Great Falls